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April 14, 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Possible Action to Prevent Castroist
Takeover of Dominican Republic.

1. Although the Department of State has no firm evidence which would warrant the conclusion that the Government of Generalissimo Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic will fall within the next several months, this possibility can no longer be excluded in view of the recent deterioration of the Generalissimo's domestic and international position.

2. Accordingly, there may not be time quietly to encourage a moderate, pro-United States leadership among the civilian and military dissident elements to take over in the event of the flight, assassination, death or overthrow of Trujillo--as was visualized in the existing Dominican Republic contingency plan discussed with you and with the National Security Council on January 14.

3. The Department has examined the possibility of inducing Trujillo to leave the Dominican Republic after asking the United States and/or the OAS to move in to assure an orderly transition. It has been concluded that Latin American sanction or support could not be obtained for U. S. or OAS action based on a request by Trujillo himself but that there is a chance of some, but not unanimous, cooperation if the request came from a reasonably acceptable successor regime immediately after Trujillo's departure.

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4. This raises the question of whether the United States should now try to forestall a pro-Castro takeover by seeking actively to bring about the early overthrow of Trujillo provided that we can make prior arrangements with an appropriate civil-military leader group in a position to and willing to take over the Dominican Government with the assurance of United States support. For success, the United States would have to be willing to commit itself in advance to employ, if necessary, U. S. Armed Forces at the request of the provisional government under Article III of the Rio Treaty to deter or prevent Castro- or Communist-inspired invasions or armed insurrection. This could include putting naval vessels into port and/or the landing of U. S. forces in the Dominican Republic provided there were reasonable assurance that they would not have to fire on the local inhabitants or meet serious resistance from armed military or civilian elements.

5. The enclosed plan is submitted for your approval as a basis for immediate planning by the Department, the Armed Forces, and the Central Intelligence Agency. Your approval to implement the action will be sought before the plan is set into action.

/s/ CHRISTIAN A. HERTER

Christian A. Harter

Enclosure:

Proposed Plan.

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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Problem

To determine whether the United States should attempt to forestall the installation of a Castro-type government in the Dominican Republic by (a) acting to remove Trujillo as soon as possible by more active intervention by U. S. representatives, to the end that a suitable successor regime can be prepared to take over, or (b) refraining from actions which would hasten Trujillo's downfall while seeking over a somewhat longer period to identify, develop and encourage a moderate civil-military leadership which would be prepared to take over upon his natural death, assassination, flight or overthrow.

Discussion

The existing Dominican contingency plan approved by the Secretary and briefed to the National Security Council on January 14 is based on the second of these alternatives. However, since that time the domestic and international position of Trujillo has greatly weakened. Neither the Department nor the U. S. Ambassador has firm evidence which would warrant a conclusion that a climax will be reached within the next few months, but this can no longer be excluded. If present trends continue--as is likely--there will be for the next several months or more a continuing danger that the Trujillo regime will fall before the goal is reached of having a civil-military group adequately prepared to take over.

In the present climate of Dominican and Latin American opinion, delay in the end of the Trujillo regime

(a) makes more difficult the achievement of U. S. objectives with respect to Cuba because of the tendency of many Latin Americans to place hatred of Trujillo higher than concern of Castro;

(b) has already tended to make previously pro-American Dominican dissident elements--who are

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increasingly desperate--more responsive to Castro's appeal and more critical of the U. S. for failure actively to help them; and

(c) builds up tensions and hatreds within the Dominican Republic which could result in chaos or civil strife when Trujillo falls.

In the event that a Castro-type government or one sympathetic to Castro is established in the Dominican Republic, (a) it is probable that the Government of Haiti and/or one or more of the Central American Governments would also come into the hands of pro-Castro elements, and (b) that this would greatly delay the achievement of our objectives in Cuba and seriously diminish the chances of inter-American support of the United States on the Cuban question.

It is essential that, in the event U. S. military force is required to deter or prevent a Castro-type takeover of the Dominican Republic, the best possible public face be put on the action and, specifically, that the U. S. act only on the basis of a request by a provisional Dominican Government and/or under an appropriate action by the Organization of American States.

Proposed Actions

It is proposed that the United States now lay plans and take preparatory action looking to an early decision that, should the situation with respect to the Dominican Republic continue to deteriorate, the United States would immediately take political action to remove Trujillo from the Dominican Republic as soon as a suitable successor regime can be induced to take over with the assurance of U. S. political, economic and--if necessary--military support. Plans and preparatory action should be taken so that when the decision is made, immediate action can be taken to:

(a) Instruct the United States Ambassador in the Dominican Republic to seek--with such intelligence support as he requires--within the next few weeks to make arrangements with appropriate civil and military dissident elements to be prepared to take over the Government. He should be authorized to indicate to them that they should immediately request U. S. recognition, and ask for U. S. military assistance under Article III of the Rio Treaty if unable to maintain themselves against

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actual or threatened Castro-sponsored invasions or against threatened insurrection incited by pro-Castro or pro-Communist elements inside or outside the country. In the event U. S. military aid is requested, provisional government should simultaneously request assistance from OAS.

(b) Provided step (a) is successful, make appropriate arrangements to persuade Trujillo to leave voluntarily but avoiding any steps or commitments which would identify the U. S. with him or imply that the U. S. condones his past actions.

(c) Be prepared to extend rapidly diplomatic assistance to the new regime.

(d) Be prepared to organize or join in an appropriate OAS action to condemn the Trujillo regime and, if possible, to offer a collective guarantee--including the use of military force--to assure that the will of the Dominican people can be expressed free of outside--i.e. Castro--influence.

(e) Be prepared if necessary to assist unilaterally the new regime militarily, including the landing of U. S. forces at the request of the provisional government should OAS action not be forthcoming immediately.

(f) In the event that there is no request for U. S. military assistance from a provisional government substantially in control of the country nor appropriate action by the OAS, the United States should then avoid action that would result in the use of U. S. forces against significant resistance within the Dominican Republic or otherwise place the United States in the position of seizing foreign territory by use of force.

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